

MassHealth Dental Benefit Cuts
What you need to know

**On March 15, 2002 most adults on MassHealth will
lose their current level of dental benefits.**

Although many adults will lose their benefits, there are important exceptions for persons with disabilities under a category called "Special Circumstances." People designated by DMA as meeting the criteria may still be eligible for the full range of adult dental services that were covered under the pre-March 15 rules. The following information should be shared with your clients and co-workers.

Eligibility Criteria

To demonstrate special circumstances, the member must have

- (a) A severe, chronic disability that
 - (i) is attributable to a mental or physical impairment or combination of mental or physical impairments;
 - (ii) is likely to continue indefinitely; and
 - (iii) results in the member's inability to maintain oral hygiene; **or**
- (b) a clinical condition (such as human immunodeficiency virus or cancer) that has advanced to a stage where an infection resulting from oral disease would likely be life-threatening.

For purposes of DMA's dental regulations, "inability to maintain oral hygiene" means that

- (a) the member is unable to
 - (i) independently or with assistance (provided that such assistance actually is available), brush and floss his or her teeth and perform other routine acts of personal hygiene; **or**
 - (ii) report oral pain; **or**
- (b) the nature of the member's disability is such that routine acts of personal oral hygiene are insufficient to effectively maintain such hygiene.

Prior Authorization

In order to designate a patient under the "special circumstances" category, the dentist seeks "prior authorization" (P.A.):

- ? If DMA receives the P.A. request by MARCH 25, 2002 for a special circumstances designation, then the full range of current adult dental services may be available until MassHealth makes a decision on the request.
- ? If the special circumstances P.A. is denied, an appeal can be filed and the patient can continue getting the full range of adult dental services until the appeal is decided.
- ? A separate P.A. will still be needed for services like crowns and root canals as per MassHealth guidelines.
- ? If DMA receives the P.A. request for special circumstances designation **after** March 25, 2002, the full range of adult dental services is not available until MassHealth approves the request.

Special Circumstance Category

The PA request for SC designation, must include a description of the member's disability or clinical condition, including but not limited to the member's specific diagnosis and expected prognosis, and

- (1) whether, and specifically why, the member's disability results in the member's inability to maintain oral hygiene (a physician, PCC, or dentist may document this requirement); or
- (2) a description of the member's clinical condition, which has advanced to a stage where an infection resulting from oral disease would likely be life-threatening (only a physician or PCC may document this requirement).

Please note that certain dental practices designated by DMA as Adult Limited Practices or ALPs may use a streamlined method for requesting prior authorization for special circumstances designation.

The P.A. for special circumstances should be submitted to:

Division of Medical Assistance
Attn: Prior Approval Unit
600 Washington Street
Boston, MA 02111